Workplace Absenteeism in the Nigerian Telecommunication Sector: Causes, Consequences and Control

Omoh Benita Okpeku* and Richard Abayomi Aborisade**
**Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Business Environment and Society, Coventry University, Coventry, United Kingdom Tel: +2348056147100; Email: ra.aborisade@gmail.com
**Department of Sociological Studies, College of Social and Management Sciences, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

In spite of the prevalence of workplace absenteeism within the Nigerian industry, the quantification of the impact that it has on productivity has not been ascertained. Though, appreciable number of studies has been committed to understand why employees excuse themselves from duties, however, these studies have been largely situated within the developed Western communities of Europe and America. Therefore, this study aimed to cover the gap in literature by examining the peculiarities of workplace absenteeism within the Nigerian work and cultural environment. The study empirically examined the policies and strategies that are deployed by telecommunication companies to address the issue of high absenteeism of employees in their workplaces. Adopting the use of a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods of qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study solicited information from 12 in-depth interviews, 4 key informant interviews and 400 questionnaires. It found that the measures and policies put into use by the telecoms companies leans very strongly on the Western style of managing workplace absenteeism. It was suggested that the management of indigenous companies should always consider the peculiarity of the Nigerian environmental, cultural and traditional situations in any measure that they are adopting from foreign countries.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical studies have acknowledged absenteeism as a major workplace problem that is of paramount interest to employers of labour worldwide, as both tangible and intangible financial losses are incurred by business managers due to the excessive absence of their staff from their duty posts

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under different excuses (Brooke and Price, 2009). This has triggered employers, managers, academics and consultants to deploy means of examining, understanding and evolving ways of reducing workplace absenteeism and its attendant havocs on the operations and financial wellbeing of business organisations. Several studies have thus being conducted to investigate reasons for the excessive sick and other forms of leave taken by employees to be absent from work. Outcomes of these studies indicate that the causes of absenteeism range from health (Jackson, Lezzi and Lafreniere, 1997), low morale (Jacobson et al, 1996), poor working conditions (Tang and Hammontree, 1992), boredom on the job (Regin and Reitzammer, 2008), lack of job satisfaction (Steers and Rhodes, 2008), personal problems (Kim and Garman, 2003), poor physical fitness (Price and Mueller, 1986) and others.

In Nigeria, high rate of workplace absenteeism is considered as one of the main human capital risks that account for low productivity of business organisations in the country (Ejere, 2010). Employees not showing up for work within the public and private enterprises in the country is considered a disease that is plundering the profitability of the these organisations and preventing them from performing at peak (Babaita, 2008). Consequently, management of several business firms have been seeking for avenues to reduce the rate of absenteeism in their companies as a way of regularizing the losses of the organisation to the growing menace.

However, in spite of the high prevalence of workplace absenteeism within Nigerian industries, the quantification of the impact that it has on productivity has not been ascertained (Babaita, 2008). This may be attributable to the inadequate attention that is being paid to the problem by employers of labour especially large organisations. Also, the practice of 'covering up' of absent workers by supervisors who are bonded by the unwritten culture of 'being a brother's keeper', as a practice of social solidarity, is another factor that hides the rate of absenteeism from the management of companies in the country (Ejere, 2010). However, this does not becloud the ominous perception of the problem of absenteeism in workplaces in the country.

On the other hand, the few business organisations that appreciate the enormity of the problem are quick to deploy the same strategies that are being used by business firms in the developed countries rather than devise local means of examining and solving the problem. This is especially the case in multinational companies, as they rely on the 'antidote' provided by their international head office which are mostly located in Europe and America (Champion Newspaper 2010). Similarly, indigenous companies that consult with local HR consultancy services for solutions seldom receives tailor-made panacea that is peculiar to their organisation and Nigerian work environment (Babaita, 2008). This is due to the overreliance of the HR consultants (who are mostly trained in Europe and America) on the theories and literature that emanated from the Western work environment. This therefore brings about

the problem of compatibility with what obtains within the Nigerian environment.

Though as stated, appreciable number of studies has been committed to understand why employees excuse themselves from duties, however, these studies have been largely situated within the developed and Western communities of Europe and America (Clegg, 1993; Kim and Garman, 2003; Brooke and Price, 2009). Considering the socio-cultural distinctions that exist between Nigeria, a developing country and the developed Western communities, it will be pertinent to examine if there are peculiarities of workplace absenteeism within the Nigerian work and cultural environment. This is largely in order to test the applicability of the theories and explanations of the literature on absenteeism which are mainly based on the empirical studies on Western and developed countries, to that of the African labour industry in general, and Nigeria work environment in particular.

The overall aim of this research is to empirically examine the causes, effects, policies and strategies that are deployed by telecommunication companies to address the issue of high absenteeism of employees in their workplaces. This is in order to assess the effectiveness of the machineries put in place by the management of the telecoms outfits in the country to increase workers commitment to their duties and enhance corporate performance. Specifically, the study examined and analysed the rate and impact of workers' absenteeism within the telecoms industry in Nigeria; explored and described the measures and policies adopted by the selected telecoms companies to address the problem of absenteeism within their work places and measured the attitude and motivation of the employees in attending to their workplaces.

Theoretical considerations

Steers and Rhodes developed the model on absenteeism which according to Harrison and Martocchio (1998) was considered to be of high influence and often cited in literature about absenteeism in organisations. It is stated in the model that the capability of employees to attend to work is mainly determined by how motivated and their ability to perform their duties. According to them the attendance of employee is a concept which is a function of two variables: Ability to attend and Motivation to attend. These two variables have been regarded as being able to interact in a manner that an individual supposed ability to be present as work often moderates his enthusiasm to attend work. This has been known as attendance relationship (Steers and Susan, 1978).

It was further argued that personal attributes or characteristics that does not include tenure, gender, family size, education as well as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, family responsibility, ability to attend which encompass sickness, accident, transport problems, pressure to attend which include attendance reward bonuses/incentives/system, work group norms all

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either in isolation or in combination, influence absenteeism of employees (Steers and Susan, 1990). It is however noteworthy that the list of influences earlier mentioned were addition to their model had initially developed in 1978 that only identified job satisfaction as the only specific significant factor that affects the motivation for attendance. It has been posited that attendance motivation is influenced by organisational practices, attitudes, culture of absenteeism, values and goals of employees. The employees that are adequately satisfied with their jobs do have stronger loyalty to the organisation and proud of it, therefore such employee will desire to actively engage in activities for the betterment of the organisation, and this is evident through the constant presence of the employee at work.

Those with low organisational commitment in most cases will not put a lot of sacrifices or efforts for the sake of improving the organisation (Rhodes and Steers, 1990). For example, minor issue like bad weather will be used as excuse by such employees with low commitment in order not to report for duty, however, those that have very high organisational commitment will see such situations as a barrier to be overcome. Furthermore, the absence culture of employees is affected or influenced by employees' attitude, goals and values as well as organisational practices. The summary of the issue as given by Rhodes and Steers (1990:11) indicates that it has to do with job satisfaction and that "absenteeism can be symbolic of deeper feelings of hostility or perceptions of inequitable treatment in the job situation". Therefore, from the model, it is expected that attendance motivation would be higher for workers' perceived to strongly believe that work is more central to their life than other activities and for those who suggest that they are highly and actively involved in the work as well as very satisfied with their jobs (Rhodes and Steers, 1990).

The link or relationship between real attendance and attendance motivation of workers is determined by a worker's thought ability to be present at his/her work station. This on the other hand is influenced by both organisational practices and barriers that hinder attendance, the barriers are illness, transportation problems, accidents, family responsibilities and adverse weather conditions (Rhodes and Steers, 1990). The aforementioned reasons and influences of absenteeism are referred to as involuntary, since the reasons are considered to be legitimate traditionally. Impediments to attendance for example, employee health have been theorised in the model as one of the causal factors for absenteeism (Broadhurst, 2010). Workers whose health is poor are also prone to fall sick for this reason will use the sick leave. Relatedly, another barrier to attendance, job stress together with health does have serious consequences as it may compel employees to permanently or temporarily leave the organisation. According to Hanebuth (2008), there are other barriers to attendance that also lie in the personal characteristics which include tenure, education, gender and age that affect or influence the ability of the employers to attend work. The model hypothesises that age is inversely related to absenteeism (Rhodes and Steers, 1990).

Though the model of absenteeism have been widely acknowledged and cited as providing in-depth explanation of absenteeism. According to Broadhurst (2010) the model does have its merits as it is theory based (theorised), simple to use and offer general outcomes about the habit, the model also provides researchers with the base or starting point in expanding and coming up with other new suitable models. However, there are some critiques of the model that have asked some fundamentals of the theory. One of the notable limitations of the model is its failure to incorporate the multi-dimensionality of the absence behaviour. The model is also limited by its inability to separate absenteeism into a number of components hence not capable of establishing hidden factors that contributes to the habit of non-attendance (Ramsey and Punnett, 2007). In addition, the model also measures overall absenteeism therefore specific causes cannot be easily pointed out therefore difficult to study hidden results (Johns, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

This research is an exploratory one that intends to examine the particular factors that are accountable for the high rate of absenteeism of workplace within the Nigerian labour industry. Drawing a case study from four telecoms companies in the country, the research adopted the deductive approach to test major theories on workplace absenteeism as well as existing literature on the subject. The study was mainly located in the 'economic capital' of Nigeria-Lagos Sate.

The main population for this study consisted of: Employees of telecommunication companies selected for the study within Lagos, Nigeria; Senior HR staff of the selected telecommunication companies and HR Consultants within Lagos City. Twelve HR senior officers of four (4) selected telecommunication companies constituted the main research respondents of the study. The four telecoms companies were purposively selected from the entire telecoms companies that operate within Nigeria. The main criteria that were used for the purposively sampling of the companies were their size and coverage within the country. Using these criteria, only four of the several telecoms companies within the sector in Nigeria met the condition. They are MTN, Globalcom, Airtel and Etisalat. Most of the other telecoms companies focus their service provisions on some choice regions within the company. In addition, these aforementioned four telecoms are the highest employers within the country. Also, they are the only four telecoms companies that supply GSM, fixed wireless, 3G, internet broadband and other related services to the country as complete package.

From these four telecoms companies, purposive sampling methods were deployed to select three (3) senior HR officers each from the companies for in-depth interviews. In respect of the key informant interview, HR

consultants within the location of study that were able to provide informed opinions and contributions to the subject of discourse of the study were be engaged. Finally, the study elicited quantitative responses from 400 members of staff of the four telecoms companies using quota and random sampling techniques. However, out of the 400 respondents engaged, a total number of 304 responses were obtained and analysed for the study. Data collected from the field were analysed to meet with the research objectives and answer the research questions. Qualitative data collected through interviews with the use of electronic tapes were transcribed, synthesized and organised under thematic headings with the use of the MAXQDA software. Data from questionnaire were analysed with the use of the SPSS tool.

RESULTS

The rate and impact of workers' absenteeism

Prior to this study, there had not been a good number of researches on absenteeism within the Nigerian workplace. This explains the dearth of literature on absenteeism from the Nigerian perspective as most indigenous HR practitioners rely on foreign literature and research reports to get acquainted with the concept. This position is supported by Babaita (2008) who posited that despite the fact that workplace absenteeism is very prevalent within the Nigerian industry, the quantification of the impact that it has on productivity has not been ascertained. Consequently, this study made efforts to examine the rate and impact that absenteeism plays as a workplace challenge in Nigeria, especially within the telecoms industry. From the study, it was discovered that most Nigerian companies does not document the rate of absenteeism in their workplace. Virtually all the experts of HR that were engaged in the key informant interviews asserted that companies seldom bother to consult their services over absenteeism in their workplaces because they consider it a 'minor' problem that they could easily find ways of solving. One of the key informants volunteered:

…there are cultural issues linked with the covering-up of the rate of absenteeism within Nigerian work environment. The head offices of these companies do not get adequate information or true reflection of the rate of absenteeism in their local branches. Therefore, this makes it difficult for the management of companies to evolve ways of combating the problem. In any case, this does not remove the problem or its impact on productivity within the Nigerian labour industry…

Ejere (2010) also attributed the inadequate attention that workplace absenteeism is receiving within the Nigerian work environment to the culture of 'protection' of colleagues by supervisors and failure to adequately report cases of absenteeism. Rather, supervisors within local branches cover-up for

the absent officer by delegating some staff to combine the duties of the absent officer with that of his/her duties. One of the companies' HR officers corroborated this assertion:

…though all our branches use staff attendance registers that are meant to keep track of the attendance and punctuality rate of the employees, however, the management do not make use of these registers for analysis of staff absenteeism or punctuality as it is meant to be. These registers are merely discarded as soon as they are full and new ones are open. The only time reference is made to them is during appraisal exercise for promotion or related activities…

In order to examine the rate of absenteeism of the quantitative respondents of the study from their workplaces, they were requested to rate themselves on their attendance to workplace within the last one year, table 1 show their response.

Table 1: Responses on self-rating of attendance to work in the last one year

Responses	Frequency
Below 15%	6 (1.97%)
15-30%	28 (9.21%)
31-50%	13 (4.28%)
51-75%	76 (25.00%)
76-100%	138 (45.39%)
I don't know	43 (14.15%)
Total	304 (100%)

The responses of the employees as shown in the table 1 shows that there is relatively low general attendance rate of the employees even though majority of them (138, 45.39%) indicated that their attendance rate was between 76-100%. However, as it implies a huge number of them 123 (40.46%) cannot boast of having attended to their duties for up to 76% within the past on year. Therefore, contrary to the position of the interviewed HR officials of the telecommunication companies, the rate of absenteeism in their workplaces is quite high. The impact of this high rate of absenteeism according to a key informant is quite enormous:

…there will be drastic reduction in productivity, quality of service, health concern, as the absent workers exert more pressure on the working ones, making them vulnerable to stress, loss of revenue and other adverse incidences that could impact on the health of the company…

The assertions of the key informants on the impact that absenteeism could have on the telecoms industry in Nigeria raises no objections to the postulations of theorists on the possible impact of absenteeism on workplaces (Ulleberg and Rundmo, 2007; Sagie, 2008).

Measures and policies adopted to address absenteeism

Empirical evidences have already asserted that employee absenteeism is a major burden to the workplace and employers (George and Jones, 2002; Hackett, 2008). When the workers miss work, they are unable to collaborate with work teams and to complete tasks and assignments. Quite a number of theorists have postulated ways of addressing the problem of workplace absenteeism within the reviewed literature. However, virtually all the strategies formulated and suggested in the literature were specifically designed to fit into the developed-Western work environment without adequate considerations of the developing African setting.

Therefore, this study considered it imperative to examine methods deployed by the Nigerian companies at addressing the problem of workplace absenteeism. In the in-depth interview sessions, the HR officers were requested to provide information on the policies and measures adopted by their various telecoms companies in addressing the problem of absenteeism. One of them proffered:

…it forms part of the criteria that we use in promoting our staff to the next rank. We also give incentives for attendance and punctuality at our annual events, especially as part of the end of year activities…

Another official interviewed opined:

…we use both incentive and punitive measures, for the incentives we recognise the loyal staff, while there are sanctions for those that refuse to show up for work without cogent reasons…

There was a more detailed response from another HR official:

…we have a culture that does not tolerate excessive absence from duty. First, we make the workers understand their relevance to the organisational goals, we build a highly conducive environment for work, ensures that the staff are mandatorily given their annual leave from work, and oftentimes we reward attendance. This enables the employees to understand the reason why they need to appear for work each day which is more than just trying to keep their job. There is this spirit that everyone is a stakeholder…

Virtually all the information provided by the HR officials of the selected telecoms companies aligns with the postulations of key literature reviewed in this study (Brooke and Price, 2009; Redman and Wilkinson, 2009). This could imply that the organisations are leaning on the Western-style of managing workplace absenteeism. If the outcome of the attendance rate of the employees as illustrated in table 4.1 is anything to go by, then it might be pertinent for this study to suggest that the policies of the companies to address the problem of absenteeism has not been very effective as there is still relatively high absence rate in the workplaces.

The motivation and attitude of the workers in attending their workplaces

In furtherance to the theoretical background of the study that stipulates that the two variables; motivation and ability to work, have been regarded as being able to interact in a manner that an individual supposed ability to be present as work often moderates his enthusiasm to attend work, this study moved to investigate the motivation of the employees to their work. The respondents were requested to select the factors that encourage them to attend work (selecting all that applies to them), table 2 below shows their response.

Table 2: Responses of the employees on the factors that encourage them to attend work

Responses	Frequency
Good Salary	198 (65.13%)
Work Environment	102 (33.55%)
Friendly Staff	136 (44.74%)
Promotion and Recognition	46 (15.13%)
Training and development programmes	71 (23.35%)
Better working equipment	27 (8.88%)
Others	11 (3.62%)

The responses of the employees indicates that the major motivation that brings them to work is slightly different from what the HR officers volunteered in their interview, as 'good salary' was the most selected motivating factor (198, 65.13%) that encourages the workers while most of the HR officers indicated that the main strategy that their companies uses to reduce absenteeism is through recognition and promotion of the staff based on their impressive attendance rate.

This disparity in the most influential motivating factor for work attendance by the employees could be responsible for the relatively high absenteeism rate among the employees as evident in table 1. This also shows that the companies engaged in the study might be falling short of understanding and applying the psychological model of absenteeism in such a way that it would engender positive attendance of their employees.

Furthermore, in consideration of the response of the workers on the rating of their rate of attendance to work in the past one year which was relatively low (see table 1), the study moved to examine how the employees feel about their duties at work. Table 3 shows the response of the employees to this question:

Table 3: Response to the question of how the employee feels about their duties at work

Responses	Frequency
I really enjoy doing my duties	93 (30.59%)
I enjoy doing my duties at work	71 (23.36%)
I am indifferent to my duties at work	76 (25.00%)
I do not like my duties at work	42 (13.81%)
I am only forced to work at all	22 (7.24%)
Total	304 (100%)

The responses of the employees as illustrated in table 3 shows that majority of them (93, 30.59%) 'really enjoy doing their duties'. However, this is incidentally followed by those that are 'indifferent' to the duties that they perform with 76 (25.00%) of them selecting this option. This seem a bit high particularly if combined with those that 'do not like' their duties and those that are only 'forced' to work' with 140 (46.05%) of them selecting the options. In a further move to examine the attitude and motivation of the employees to work, they were asked to rate their punctuality to their workplace within the past year, table 4 shows their response:

Table 4: Responses of the employees on their self-rating of punctuality to the workplace

Responses	**Frequency**
Always Punctual	66 (21.71%)
Punctual	87 (28.62%)
Sometimes punctual	70 (23.03%)
Often late to the office	41 (13.49%)
Never Punctual	11 (3.61%)
I don't know	29 (9.54%)
Total	304 (100%)

The responses of the employees on how they will rate themselves in terms of punctuality also shows relatively low rate of punctuality trend despite majority of them (87, 28.62) stating that they were 'punctual' within the last one year. However, those that stated that they are 'sometimes punctual' placed second in frequency with 70 (23.03%) of them. This follows the same trend on the responses of the employees since majority of them had earlier stated that they have not attended their workplace regularly enough in the last one year (see table 1). This study however, requested the employees to

indicate the most consistent reason for their missing work on the days that they couldn't attend, table 4.5 shows their response:

Table 5: Responses of the employees on their self-rating of punctuality to the workplace

Responses	Frequency
Took ill	76 (25.00%)
Social function	28 (9.21%)
Just didn't feel like coming to work	17 (5.59%)
Family issues	126 (41.45%)
Others	41 (13.49%)
I don't know	16 (5.26%)
Total	304 (100%)

The responses above shows that the most consistent reason that accounts for the workers' absence from work is 'family issues' with a frequency of 126 (41.45%). This is followed by those that failed to attend for health reasons (76, 25.00%). The emergence of 'family issue' as the most consistent reason for the workers missing their places of work may not be unconnected with the strong roles that family plays within the African traditional settings. Family has always being considered first, over and above other factors as the family institution is the most influential of the social institutions within the African social structure (Mazrui, 1992).

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study in respect of the rate and impact of workers' absenteeism agrees with the positions of most of the reviewed literature which states that there has not being proper documentation of the rate of absenteeism of workers within the Nigerian work environment (Babaita, 2008; Ejere, 2010) as all the companies visited do not have a culture of strong documentation of their workers attendance rate. Even where the attendance registers are being used, there is no proper system of archiving the registers for future use in evaluating the attendance or absenteeism rate within the organisations. This explains why there have been not many studies on workplace absenteeism within the Nigerian work environment as it is not yet considered as a major problem.

However, the findings of this study do not suggest that the problem of absenteeism is minor, as majority of the employees could not rate themselves above 75% of attendance at their workplaces within the last one year. This therefore shows a high rate of absenteeism that has not been properly

documented by their employers. The study found strong cultural ties that exist between workers within workplaces as the major reason for the several unreported cases of absenteeism within the Nigerian work environment. This is especially so as literature on the history of work in Africa and in particular Nigeria, have situated work within the socio-cultural function, rather than economic as it is being perceived in the modern times. According to Rodney (1973), the purpose of work in traditional African communities changed during the 1600s when Africans were shipped to North America as slaves. Hitherto, Africans perceive work as part of their norms and values as well as a symbol of unification for peer groups. Therefore, the cultural aspect of work remains strong within the Nigerian workplace, and measures to curtail absenteeism should incorporate cultural factors in order to succeed.

This study found that the measures and policies put into use by the telecoms companies leans very strongly on the Western style of managing workplace absenteeism. The information volunteered by the HR officers interviewed on the policies of their organisations on workplace absenteeism has major similarities with literature of Western origins that were reviewed in the study. What is quite notable in the similarities between the Western literature and policies of the telecoms companies is the factor that they consider will motivate the workers to attend to their duties. Virtually all the companies pointed out that recognition and promotion of staff for attendance as a means of rewarding the employees is the most potent motivational factor for the workers. However, the findings of the study runs contrary to that, as the workers would be more motivated to attend to their duties with good salary. This has strong implications on the level of motivation of the staff to their duties even if they attend physically as the workers are likely to be less engaged in their duties if they are not adequately motivated. This is particularly the case as empirical studies have found the links between employee engagement and reduced rate of workplace absenteeism (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

The development of policy framework of the telecoms companies for the building of attendance oriented culture aligns more to the Western practice. This is especially so as there was no internal studies made by the organisations to investigate the motivating factors that encourages their staff to attend to their duties and become engaged. The study found out that though the companies fashioned their policies after the Western management styles which laid emphasis on motivation as a key to workers' attendance and engagement, they however failed to understand the factors that actually motivates their workers. This is premised on the findings of the study that the workers' most influential factor runs contrary to what the organisations have been using in their policies to encourage attendance and engagement.

While the companies have made 'recognition and promotion of the staff' as the reward for attendance, the workers wanted 'good salary' as a factor that would make them look forward to going to work and dedicating themselves to duties. The psychological model opined that the capability of employees to attend to work is mainly determined by how motivated and their ability to

perform their duties (Harrison and Martocchio, 1998). This model listed some personal attributes or characteristics that influence absenteeism of employees which include; tenure, gender, family size, education, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, family responsibility, ability to attend which encompass sickness, accident, transport problems, pressure to attend which include attendance reward bonuses/incentives/system, work group norms either in isolation or in combination, (Steers and Susan, 1990). However, this model failed to lay emphasis on the potency of wages/salaries to motivate the workers. This may result from the less significant consideration given to salary/wages as a motivating factor in the Western countries as compared to other factors. However, the case of the Nigerian workers has shown the huge importance of salary and staff remuneration which must be highly considered if effective policy is to evolve.

The theoretical orientation of this study that underlies the relevance and linkage of motivation and ability to attend with absenteeism facilitated the investigation of the study on the attitude and factors that motivates the workers to attend their workplaces. Though the respondents stated that they are 'enjoying their duties', their level of motivation to work appears quite low as their attendance rate was below what can be described as appreciable. The high importance that is usually given to family within the African settings were evident in the findings of the study as the employees selected 'family issues' as the most consistent single issue that accounts for their absence from work within the past one year.

The connection between the low motivation of workers and high rate of absenteeism was firmly established in this analysis as a large number of the respondents indicated that they have not been very punctual to their place of work within the past year. According to the theorists of psychological model of absenteeism, the motivation to attend is influenced by organisational practices, attitudes, culture of absenteeism, values and goals of employees. The employees that are adequately satisfied with their jobs do have stronger loyalty to the organisation and proud of it, therefore such employee will desire to actively engage in activities for the betterment of the organisation, and this is evident through the constant presence of the employee at work (Rhode and Steers, 1990; Hanebuth, 2008; Broadhurst, 2010). Derivable from the models, the study found that the workers may have been attending their workplaces with negative attitudes as they are not motivated. This could adversely impact on their productivity as the workers were found not to be effectively engaged at their places of work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the non-documentation on absenteeism within the telecommunication industry in Nigeria, the rate of absenteeism is quite high with its attendant

negative implications on productivity. However, the non-documentation of the growing rate of absenteeism is largely a function of the cultural influence on work relationship in Nigeria. The measure and practice of the telecoms companies have not been able to record remarkable minimisation of absenteeism within their workplaces due to their reliance on Western-styled management approaches. The consideration of the cross-cultural factors and other environmental peculiarities of Nigeria that could impact on the problem of absenteeism were ignored by the organisations. This has largely created gap between the policies of the companies and the motivation of the employees resulting to low level of employee engagement.

The attitudes and perceptions of the workers on workplace attendance show the relevance and support to the growing research interest on the need to develop African indigenous theories on management. The need to invest in researches on indigenous management practices and how to adapt Western management theories to the African culture have been stressed with the discoveries of the study. The key values that motivate Africans to work are not adequately taken care of in their workplaces making the staff to be delineated. This study therefore concludes that there is a dire need to rethink management theories in Africa, if seamless application of theories to the realities of workplace management is to be achieved. As it stands, there are difficulties in the applicability of the theories and styles of management that fails to consider the relativity of the Nigerian culture, values and traditions.
There is a need for the monitoring and documentation of workplace absenteeism by the Nigerian work industry as the study found the rate to be high enough to attract the interest of the management. The management could apply cultural methods that go beyond merely using attendance register to monitor absent workers. There is need re-orientate the employees through the reconstruction of work ethics that would evolve a culture of work attendance and commitment. The use of training programmes and other informal channels can be utilised to achieve this.

It is imperative for the telecoms industry to rethink and restructure their measures and policies on the minimisation of workplace absenteeism to consider the social environment where their business is located. They should deploy more measures of employee engagement as part of strategies that would engender workers commitment which will invariably impact on the minimisation of workplace absenteeism. Furthermore, the companies should incorporate the employees on the process of making certain decisions within the workplaces especially as it affects the welfare of the employees. This will enable the workers to have good sense of belonging and reduce alienation that could lead to absenteeism.

It is imperative for the company to consider the cultural and traditional factors in any measures that they are adopting from foreign countries. This is especially important for Multinational companies that attempt to use the same management style that are in use in their mother companies in all the countries where they have their subsidiaries. Importantly, the management

need to understand the motivational factors that would assist in rewarding attendance within their workplaces.

There is need to invest in researches on indigenous management practices and how to adapt Western management theories to its culture. Therefore, more research attention should be dedicated to the study of the management practices in Nigeria. Apart from the research on management practices, there is need for African scholars to focus on the development of theories of management. This will enable the effective mix of theories and practices of management in such a way that it will facilitate enduring development in the African work industry.

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